



Washington State
Department of Transportation

I-5 M Street to Portland Avenue - HOV

March 2016

I-5 HOV construction project underway

Crews are working on a three-year construction project to expand and improve Interstate 5 between South M Street and East L Street in Tacoma. This project will lead to many benefits for motorists and is part of a larger effort to build high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-5, State Route 16 and State Route 167 in Pierce County.

What does this project mean to Tacoma residents?

The most noticeable impacts to Tacoma residents are lengthy staged closures of the Pacific Avenue and McKinley Way overpasses spanning I-5. Both overpasses have piers - structures that support the bridges - that conflict with the future locations of widened I-5 lanes. During the closures, which will not occur at the same time, each overpass will be demolished and rebuilt.

In spring 2015, work to demolish and rebuild the Pacific Avenue overpass began. The overpass is closed around the clock and all Pacific Avenue traffic is being detoured as shown in the top map at right.

Wet weather has delayed recent progress on building the new overpass, and the original reopening date of March 2016 has been revised. Depending on weather, crews now estimate the Pacific Avenue overpass will reopen to one lane of traffic in June or July, 2016. Two months later, all lanes on the overpass will reopen.

When the first two lanes open on Pacific, crews will close the McKinley Way overpass for 18 months or longer, depending on weather, and will detour traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians as shown on the bottom map at right. Why does McKinley need to be closed longer than Pacific? The longer closure is needed because I-5 under the two overpasses is different. Under Pacific Avenue, crews have room to construct the new overpass adjacent to I-5 lanes without directly affecting them. In the case of the McKinley Way overpass, however, crews must complete some work on I-5 before the McKinley Way overpass can be completed and reopened.

Project Timeline

Project advertisement - March 31, 2014 through June 4, 2014
Contract award and execution - June and July 2014
Construction - July 2014 through 2017



The Pacific Avenue overpass is closed to vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Detour routes are shown above.



After the Pacific Avenue overpass reopens, the McKinley Way overpass will be closed to vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Detour routes are shown above. This closure is longer than the Pacific Avenue closure because portions of I-5 must be built first before the McKinley Way overpass can be completed. McKinley Way will reopen in late 2017.

This project will result in many improvements:

- Build northbound and southbound HOV lanes on I-5. The HOV lanes will remain closed until projects to the north are completed across the Puyallup River.
- Install on-ramp meters to maximize highway traffic flow.
- Resurface northbound and southbound I-5.
- Build new McKinley Way and Pacific Avenue overpasses to accommodate a widened I-5.
- Widen shoulders, improve ramp alignments and curves.
- Improve lighting, stormwater collection and treatment.
- Install new high performance barrier.
- Install traffic cameras and highway advisory radio capacity.
- Improve electronic signage for traveler notification.
- Install traffic data collectors. WSDOT uses the data to provide traffic information to the public.

What can drivers and transit expect?

- Lengthy closures of the Pacific Avenue and McKinley Way overpasses (not at the same time).
- Weeknight and weekend lane and ramp closures.
- Periodic night detours for highway on-ramps and exits.
- Lane shifts and roadway restriping as crews create space for construction zones and additional lanes.
- Several high-impact weekends where traffic will see reduced lanes for construction activities.

What can the local community expect?

- Long-term detours around Pacific Avenue and McKinley Way closures at I-5.
- Day, night, and weekend work, mainly on I-5 lanes and ramps.
- Construction noise during the day and night from trucks, tractors, paving equipment, back-up alarms required for safety.



The aerial photo above shows I-5 when the project began in 2014. The Pacific Avenue overpass has since been demolished. Once rebuilt and reopened, crews will demolish and rebuild the McKinley Way overpass.



This artist's rendering shows I-5 in 2017 when WSDOT finishes the project. New northbound I-5 lanes are shown on the right. Current northbound I-5 lanes are converted to northbound and southbound HOV lanes that will open later when projects to the north are completed.

This project is part of WSDOT's Tacoma/Pierce County HOV Program, which is a series of improvement projects on Interstate 5, State Route 16 and State Route 167. The projects are designed to build HOV lanes, ease traffic congestion and increase safety.

What are HOV lanes?

HOV lanes are high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, also known as carpool or diamond lanes. HOV lanes are identified by signs along the road and diamonds on the pavement. In order to use HOV lanes, most vehicles must carry at least two people. Public buses, motorcycles and emergency vehicles may use HOV lanes regardless of the number of occupants. The new HOV lanes on I-5 in Tacoma will open after an adjacent project at the Puyallup River bridge is complete

Where can I get more information?

Claudia Bingham Baker
Olympic Region Communications Manager
360-357-2789
bakerc@wsdot.wa.gov

www.tacomatrafic.com

Twitter: @wsdot_tacoma

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/PierceCountyHOV/I5_MStoPortland/

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/piercecountyhov/>

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